

Article

# Citizenship Education for Adults for Sustainable Democratic Societies

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**Abstract:** Adults have a key role in ensuring that society is democratic and sustainable, by making decisions about the permanence and continuity of the world/society, and as role models to the new participants in a democratic society. In this context, the purpose of this research is to determine the citizenship education needs of adults in a sustainable democratic society. The study was designed in a qualitative research pattern and was carried out using the case study method. The study group consisted of adults, who were determined by criteria sampling method. Demographic data, a semi-structured interview form, and scenario texts were used to obtain data. The data obtained were analysed by using the content analysis method. Perspectives on adult citizenship education were presented according to the themes created. It was found that participants have a citizenship tendency in line with the traditional national citizenship approach and behaved accordingly. In conclusion, this study proposes that citizenship education should be organized for adults, who are today's decision makers and role models for tomorrow's decision makers, in order to improve their political literacy, legal literacy, and political, social, civic engagement and democratic values, which will contribute to the goal of a sustainable democracy in society.

**Keywords:** sustainability; democracy; adult education; citizenship education; citizenship awareness

## 1. Introduction

Democratic regimes are regarded as popular sovereignty. However, this feature only reflects one of the current definitions of democracy. Democracy is defined as a system that enables citizens to exercise political rights in a political structure that is open to public participation and electoral competition [1]. But it should be noted that democracy is much more than constitutionally guaranteed rights and freedoms [2]. The individual takes precedence in today's understanding of democracy; special emphasis is placed on equality and freedom, and so democracy can liberate the person, giving him the opportunity to determine his personality, identity, and place in society with his or her free will [3].

Although there is no conclusive consensus, most researchers in this field argue that advanced democracy should have certain key characteristics, such as public administration, democratic rules, equal citizenship rights, political and social pluralism, rule of law, the existence of free and fair elections, protection of minorities, civil society, and policies to promote economic and social development in a sustainable manner [4,5]. Democracy, however, is also concerned with the value of equality, in the sense that every person living under a government should have the same right to freedom, and therefore his/her preference should be equally weighed [6].

The significance of being sensitive to citizen's demands and respecting the rule of law is emphasized in democracy, in addition to freedom and equality [7]. Moreover, the quality of democracy is related to the extent to which a political system is fully committed to and fulfils the essential democratic principles [8].

In this sense, an effective democracy can be explained as a regime which functions according to the rules of democracy and takes into account all the segments of society and their demands, as a form of administration in which, ideally, there is a relatively stable and legitimate administration, political accountability, equality and freedom [9]. In a reliable form of democracy, the rules of law bind both the governing and the governed, and citizens are responsible for actively participating in political, social and economic life as part of a democratic rule. In addition, the rules of law must guarantee freedoms for a democratic society in which citizens can act freely.

Many countries face problems and democratic crises in relation to human rights and freedoms, equality, participation, citizen's demands, a stable and legitimate governance, political accountability and the rule of law, which are vital elements for a consistent democracy [10–15]. In addition to the rise of right-wing populist parties which stand aloof from democracy and human rights and the increase in their voters, the emergence of authoritarian governments in Poland and Hungary, and the counter-expressions of political parties regarding Islam, migration and EU, such as France's National Front (FN) in France, the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ) in Austria, Alternative for Germany (AfD) in Germany, the U.K. Independence Party (UKIP) in the UK, Independent Greeks (ANEL) in Greece, the Lega Nord in Italy, the Finns in Finland, the Dutch Party for Freedom (PVV) in the Netherlands [15], can be given as examples of such democratic crises. Even in countries with mature democracies, there are signs of deterioration in the democratic regime, due to reasons such as the limitation of rights, the loss of voters' belonging to any particular party, the indifference of citizens to political decision-making processes, electoral instability, dissatisfaction with the performance of governments, and the distrust of citizens towards traditional elites [16]. These signs pose serious obstacles for a sustainable democratic society.

There are four basic conditions needed for a sustainable democracy to take root in a country. These include a reasonable literacy rate, lack of extreme poverty, security and peace, and cultural perceptions favorable to the basic concepts of democracy [17]. Moreover, a democratic culture is comprised of several components, the key one being willingness to take the wishes of other citizens into consideration. It's not just about letting others talk, it's about listening to what they have to say. A society becomes a sustainable democratic society when all members, or at least most of its members, feel as though they have a stake in the decisions taken, and thus struggle to make those decisions. In other words, it is possible to say that democracy will fulfil its true meaning and become part of culture when there is, as Lincoln put it, "government of the people, by the people, for the people" [18]. Education is crucial for democracies to function and ensure sustainability. Moreover, social sustainability requires democratic structures and institutions, as well as, above all, individuals with the freedom to behave in a democratic manner.

It is only through planned education that individuals learn what democratic behavior is, use their rights and freedoms with respect to others, understand the importance of fulfilling their individual and social responsibilities, and adopt a democratic culture in social life. Moreover, education must link between the past and the future to support the capacity to live together equally and the development of personal autonomy [19]. While establishing a connection between the past and the future, for a sustainable democratic society, it is important to provide the type of education that enables individuals to internalize a democratic lifestyle and culture.

Democracy, however, can develop through strong, supportive institutions, laws and a widespread democratic culture, including democratic values, knowledge and action, ethical judgments, analytical competence and skills [17]. The democratic attitudes and behaviors of the governors in the state administration are reflected in the functioning of the institutions, and democratic culture develops in societies that have adopted and implemented the rule of law. The fact that the existence and

development of democracy depends on the interaction between state leaders, institutions and the people cannot be ignored. Democracy also concerns the sustainable prosperity of the environment in which we live and includes awareness of human rights and openness to the cultural diversity of human experiences and caring for others' views. One of the most important prerequisites of democracy—the coexistence of equal individuals, with the same rights and opportunities to participate in social and political life—requires citizens to develop an awareness of their personal dignity and autonomy, in addition to mutual respect and acceptance [20].

Democratic culture is pluralistic, requiring citizens to be capable of comprehending situations and events through different perspectives. Capability to participating in a multi-voiced creation and discussion processes is the basis of social and political involvement in a participative democracy. Sustainable democratic societies need citizens with the capability and skills to discuss different realities in a democratic culture, who are aware of the relation between information and power, who discuss and define the “Earth” [20]. Maintaining a sustainable democratic society and the continuity of a country can be accomplished through looking at differences and mutual goals and leading citizens to attain citizenship awareness.

The concept of citizenship is used to refer to a person who has made meaningful contributions to his or her own society and to others—globally speaking, beyond describing oneself as a political person—and also involves the acquisition of the social virtues associated with being a “good citizen” [21]. Citizenship education, which is the method of fostering citizenship understanding, seeks to adapt individuals to the society they live in and to society's institutions and organizations [22]. For this reason, citizenship education is not only a course given in schools in formal education, but a dynamic process based on lifelong learning. This process supports every individual living as a part of society to live as an informed, problem-solving, participatory, responsible and socially responsive individual [23].

As members of nations, individuals have the rights as well as obligations that are defined by their own governments. Such freedoms are governed by the constitution in democratic societies. Its main purpose is to ensure citizens' rights and allow them to play an active role in society by engaging freely in decisions [24]. Citizens thus move beyond their individual self-interest and engage in behavior for the well-being of the society in which they live [25]. Citizens can demonstrate three forms of citizenship behaviors: a socially responsible citizen who recognizes and fulfills their obligations within society; a participatory citizen who participates in community-related activities at international, national and regional levels; and a citizen who can examine and make sense of the phenomena of cultural, economic and political powers [23].

The significance of active and effective citizenship when coping with social or even global issues is obvious. For this reason, it is noted that in developed countries—especially to encourage young people to become active, effective and participatory citizens—efforts to improve knowledge and skills and to direct values are increasing [26]. Educational systems have also produced ideas about what a good citizen should be. The definition of a good citizen is a phenomenon that varies between societies, states and governance systems. In some societies, a tight relationship is established between being a good person and respecting national interests and national symbols such as flags, and anthems [27], while in other societies, being a good citizen is synonymous with following the king's orders. The main purpose of citizenship education, in short, can be stated as training good citizens.

Citizenship education is about the ability of individuals to make decisions about their own lives and take responsibility for the society in which they live. In addition, citizenship education aims to foster good citizens and qualified individuals who are aware of political issues in their country and the world, who respect others, accept equality for all, give priority to peace and fight against all forms of discrimination [28]. Citizenship education contributes to making it possible for individuals to understand state institutions and principles, to learn to make decisions and develop a sense of individual and social responsibility.

Citizenship education enhances the skills and values of individuals with regard to their rights and responsibilities. In order to develop, societies need citizens who are active, effective, knowledgeable

and willing to take responsibility for themselves and their communities and participate in political processes. For this purpose, people are required to be aware of their rights and obligations, to be informed about social and political systems, to handle the wellbeing concerns of other persons, to understand new concepts, and to be active in their families and communities [29]. This teaching cycle will include strategies such as inclusiveness (ensuring the inclusion of all people regardless of background and ability), non-formal education (not restricting citizenship education to school and seeing it as an integral part of education) and lifelong learning (maintaining it throughout life). Citizenship education provides individuals with knowledge and understanding of laws and regulations, democratic processes, the media, human rights, the economy, sustainable development, the global community, justice, equality, freedom and autonomy. It also helps individuals to have skills and competencies in critical thinking, analysis of information, disclosure of ideas, discussion and negotiation, and conflict resolution and social participation, and improves values such as fairness, compliance with the law, tolerance, listening, and working with others. [30–34]. This sets out the goals of formal citizenship education in formal education, as well as an active citizenship education that will last informally for life.

Citizenship education should be treated as a process in which citizens are learners, who not only receive knowledge but also produce it and sustain it for life. Citizenship education's success depends on individuals' ability to gain awareness, skills, beliefs, and democratic habits, both in the process of maturity and in the process of schooling. For this reason, for a stable democratic society, adult education is becoming very relevant. There is a common consensus among policy makers and educators that lifelong learning should continue, and that lifelong learning is important to all [35]. Lindeman emphasized that adult education has always had a social aspect and asserted that the goals of adult education must be socially inclusive. According to him, school education prepares individuals for life, but adult education provokes individuals to change their lives [36]. Such provocation means collective action for a democratic society and social justice should be taken by individuals who participate in adult education. Adults, in particular, have a key role in ensuring that society is democratic and sustainable by making decisions on the permanence and continuity of the world/society and acting as a model for the new participants in a democratic society. In this context, the aim of this research is to identify the needs and situations of adults regarding citizenship education in a sustainable democratic society.

## 2. Materials and Methods

### 2.1. Research Model

The study was conducted using the case study method, one of the qualitative research methods. One of the most prominent features of qualitative studies is the conduct of research focusing on phenomena, incidences or behaviors occurring away from the interventions of external factors, that is, the examination of the actions in their natural environment [37]. Case studies are widely used in qualitative research in the field of education [38]. The most important features that determine case study can be given as the singularity, limitations, and importance of context, the availability of different sources of information, observability, and in-depth data acquisition and analyzability [39]. In other words, a qualitative case study is defined as a detailed and holistic description and analysis of a single person or entity, phenomenon or social unit [40]. This method has been preferred in research, in-depth analysis and interpretation of the status, perceptions and views of adults towards citizenship education in a sustainable democratic society.

### 2.2. Participants

The criterion sampling method, one of the purposeful sampling types, was used to determine the participants of the study. In a research, observation units can be made up of individuals, events, objects or situations with specific characteristics. In this case, the units (objects, events, people, etc.) that met the criteria set for the sample are included in the sample [41]. The participants of the study were

selected according to the criterions, which can be defined as being an adult who has reached the age of 18, being a citizen of the Republic of Turkey, having participated at least once in voting such as in Parliamentary elections, local elections or referenda in Turkey, and volunteering to participate. Citizens over the age of 18 have the right to be elected as deputies, in addition to the right to vote in the elections in Turkey. Citizens aged 18 and over can participate in elections, be effective in decision-making on important issues for society, and, in short, in serving as a determinant and bearer of democratic life, as well as for the continuity of society and country, they become a role model for new generations.

In this way, the participants of the study selected to determine the key role that adults play in a sustainable democratic society consisted of 40 adults (18 female and 22 male). Ten of the participants were aged 18 to 25; 11 were aged 26 to 35; six were aged 36–45; seven were aged 46–55; six were aged 56 and over. Of these, 10 have an elementary school education, five completed middle school; eight completed high school, two have an associate degree, 11 have an undergraduate degree, and four have a graduate education. Two of the participants were unemployed, six were apprentices, five were high school or undergraduate students, five were workers, six were civil servants, five were teachers, two were nurses, two were tradesmen, three were housewives, four were retirees.

### 2.3. Data Collection

The interview method was preferred for the collection of data in the research. In qualitative interviews, the required information is collected through an interview. The interview is described as “the process of speaking together, with the focus on questions prepared for the field of research, in which the interviewer and participant are involved together [42]. In semi-structured interviews, however, questions are flexible and have no predetermined wording and question details [43]. For this purpose, the demographics form, semi-structured interview and scenario completion form were used.

The demographic information form includes questions about gender, age, education status and occupation. The semi-structured interview form includes 16 questions for situational assessment, four open-ended questions and three uncompleted scenario texts to be concluded by the participants in accordance with the purpose of the research.

Data collection instruments, developed in consultation with expert researchers (a total of eight experts, including two field experts of programme development, two field experts of guidance and psychological counselling, one field expert of measurement and evaluation, one field expert of lifelong learning, one language expert and an expert studying issues of democracy and citizenship), were finalized after the pre-applying them to two adults for the intelligibility of questions. In the actual practice with adults, it was understood that participants did not allow audio recording for various reasons (security, etc.) and interviews were recorded in writing.

The participants were told that their identity would not be shared. The participants generally chose to write their own answers to the questions and wanted to check the notes of the researchers. The interviews lasted 30–45 min on average for each participant.

### 2.4. Data Analysis

Qualitative data are the data obtained from interviews with people involved in the study, direct quotations from one’s own statements, experiences, ideas, emotions and information or from detailed descriptions of human actions, and quotations obtained from various documents and passages [44]. The basic process of content analysis is to bring together similar data within the framework of specific concepts and themes, and to organize and interpret them in a way that the reader can understand [41]. Content analysis is used to express any attempt to reduce and make sense of qualitative data to determine basic consistency and meanings by taking the voluminous qualitative material [44]. The main objective when using content analysis is to define the phenomenon in a conceptual manner [45].

In the study, strategies of triangulation, participant verification, expert review, sampling diversity, and direct quotations from participant responses were applied for the validity, reliability and credibility of data analysis. The multiple data source method was used to control the accuracy and authenticity

of the findings in the triangulation, which included multiple researchers (researchers themselves), questions targeting categorical answers, open-ended questions, and unconcluded scenario texts. Four participants representing different sexes and ages were given feedback on their responses and their opinions were given as to whether they were reasonable. Raw data and findings were examined by an expert in the field of guidance and psychological counselling, and the data and overlap of the findings were studied. In the study group, the sample was diversified by taking care to include adults of different sexes, ages, educational backgrounds and occupations. Quotations from the participant answers are frequently included in the findings section.

Categories and themes were formed based on the answers of the participants to the questions and frequencies presented in the tables related to them. All of the participants' responses were included in the analysis, and sometimes it was seen that one participant gave answers corresponding to more than one category and theme. For this reason, sometimes there are cases where the frequency of a category is higher than the number of participants.

In addition, direct quotations from the answers given by the participants to the open-ended questions were included in the findings section and comments were made. Participant responses were encoded based on sequence numbers and used F1, F2 ... for female participants, and M1, M2 ... for male participants. Participant responses were interpreted according to gender, age, educational background and occupational variables. The perspectives and needs of adults regarding citizenship and education for a sustainable democratic society are presented according to the themes created.

### 3. Results

Table 1 shows the distribution of responses to the questions asked to reveal the perspectives of adults on citizenship for a sustainable democratic society.

**Table 1.** Distribution of participants' responses regarding their citizenship perspectives.

Questions	Yes	No	Occasionally
Do you follow the news about social events?	31	3	6
Do you follow the developments regarding economic events?	24	1	15
Do you follow the developments regarding political events?	22	4	14
Do you think you're an entrepreneurial individual?	18	9	13
Do you evaluate events from a different perspective?	22	6	12
Do you take an active role in solving social problems?	6	15	19
Is it gratifying for you to be a citizen of the Republic of Turkey?	33	2	5
Do you fight against violations of rights?	32	6	11
Can you communicate with people easily?	30	1	9
Can you easily communicate with the staff at the institutions about your request?	29	1	10
Do you participate in the process of solving a problem in the media?	11	19	10

As shown in Table 1, most of the participants follow news about social events (31 people), economic events (24 people) and political events (22 people). Only 18 of the participants identified themselves as entrepreneurs, and 22 of them stated that they could evaluate the events they face from different perspectives. On the other hand, only six of the participants stated that they could play an active role in solving social problems. It could be argued that participants who said they mainly observe social events tend to act like passive people and merely follow the process of the problem instead of engaging in the solution of the problem.

4 participants who were apprentices that graduated from secondary school or high school, 1 participant who was a tradesmen that graduated from secondary school and 1 participant who was a civil servant having bachelor degree stated that they would take an active role in solving the problems. This finding may be evidence that these participants are employed in a job where people are looking for solutions to their problems. As a result of their work, it can be said that, these participants take

responsibility for solving problems. The participants who take an active role in the solution of the problem can be said to be active citizens, while other participants can be seen as passive citizens. It is seen that the vast majority of participants are happy to be a citizen of the Republic of Turkey (33 people).

Following this question, participants were asked the question, "Should a citizen be a 'patriot'?", and all participants answered "Yes" to that question. Based on this finding, it can be said that participants feel that they belong to the country they live in, are satisfied with the identity of the country they live in, and care about the value of patriotism, which is an indicator of traditional citizenship. Considering that the traditional approach to national citizenship education prevails in formal education in Turkey, it can be alleged that the participants have this view due to the citizenship education they receive and a social acceptance.

The majority of participants stated that they fight against rights violations (23 people), communicate easily with people (30 people), and were able to communicate easily with officials working in any institutions on issues related to their requests (29 people). On the other hand, the number of participants (11 people) who say that they participate in processes related to solving a problem in the media is low. The low level of participation in the processes related to the solution of a problem in the media, as well as the taking on an active role in solving social problems was a consistent finding. Furthermore, it was determined that participants who stated that they participated in processes related to the solution of the problem in the media were 18–37 years old participants with different genders, educational statuses and occupations. Participants in this age range can be said to be media, and especially social media, users, individuals with the skill to use information and communication technologies.

Participants were asked about "the existence of their membership in any political party and non-governmental organizations". Only two of the participants were found to have membership in a political party and non-governmental organization, while 38 participants did not have any membership. Those with membership in any political party and non-governmental organization were seen to be civil servants. On the other hand, when participants were asked about their "participation status for elections, to choose/to be elected", it was determined that 37 participated in elections, one participated sometimes and two did not participate in the last election (2019 election). It appears that the vast majority of respondents participate in general and local elections. Voting in elections should be seen as pointing to the responsibility dimension of citizenship rather than participation. As a matter of fact, in the laws of the Republic of Turkey, voting in elections is stated as a civic duty and responsibility. Considering how little the participants were able to participate in solving a social problem or a problem in the media, to participate in a political or non-governmental organization, it can be said that the adults involved in the study were underdeveloped/lacked in terms of being participative citizens. In Turkey, where traditional and nationalist citizenship education prevails, the fact that the responsibility dimension of citizenship rather than participation is brought into the forefront can be cited as a reason for this finding.

The participants were asked if they knew about the texts regarding the rights and freedom such as the manifesto, declaration, law, etc., and 20 of them stated that they did not know about any legal text about rights, while 20 of them stated that they only knew that the Republic of Turkey Constitution involved certain rights. No further explanation was given to the question and, given this answer, it can be said that the participants were not aware of or were not aware of the texts of national and international law guaranteeing their rights.

Participants were asked the open-ended question, "what does it mean for you to be a good citizen?". The themes and categories of their answers to this question are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Distribution of participants' responses regarding their "good citizen" descriptions.

Theme Name	Category Name	Frequency
The value of citizenship	Patriotic	24
	Respect	11
	Hardworking	6
	Environmental awareness	5
	Fair	3
	Honest	3
	Being democratic	2
	Tolerance	2
	Helpful	1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>57</b>
Duties and responsibilities	Working for the benefit of the country	10
	Complying with the law	7
	Responsibility	7
	Working for the benefit of the community	4
	Useful for himself/herself	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>	
Belonging and identity	Devotion to the motherland and the nation	11
	<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>
Rights	To have knowledge about rights	3
	Using rights	2
	Fighting against rights violations	1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>

The themes which were repeated most frequently by the participants are citizenship value (57) duty and responsibility (31), belonging and identity (11) and rights (6). The most frequently stated categories are patriotism (24) and respect (11) (considering the value of the citizenship theme), working for the benefit of the country (10) (considering the theme of duties and responsibilities), devotion to the motherland and the nation (11) (considering the theme of belonging and identity), to have knowledge of rights (3) (considering the theme of rights). These findings are consistent with participants' responses to the questions about their citizenship perspectives, especially in terms of rights.

It was determined that there was no difference in the participants' descriptions of "good citizens" according to their demographic characteristics—gender, age, education status, and occupation. Participant M3 replied to the question requesting a "good citizen" definition, saying "an individual who loves his homeland, tries to fulfil his responsibilities, adopts the land in which he lives and works for the benefit of his country", and participant M9 defined a "good citizen" as one "who loves his homeland, respects his state, obeys the laws, respects the views of the people". According to M11, good citizen is "the person who knows his fundamental rights, who does not violate the rights of others, who reacts against all kinds of injustice, who works for the welfare of the country at all costs and F12 defines good citizens as "people who love their homeland, are hardworking, do their civic duties (such as voting, taxing, military service), are useful to their country, respectful, tolerant, do not harm public property, are sensitive to their environment". M21 emphasized democracy and justice with the phrase "the good citizen is democratic and just", while M39 emphasized "the belonging and complying with the law" in his statement: "a good citizen is the person who is fully committed to his homeland, his nation, his flag, acting in accordance with the laws and rules". Similarly, F40 replied, "the good citizen does her/his duty, abides by the law, loves his country, has morals". Evaluating all these answers in general, it is seen that the participants' descriptions of "good citizen" include patriotism and respectfulness, working for the benefit of the country, complying with the law, being responsible, and loyalty to one's homeland. On the other hand, none of the participants addressed the effective participation aspect of citizenship, while very few participants mentioned "knowing

and exercising rights” and “the struggle for rights” in their statements. This finding is similar to the participants’ views on citizenship.

Participants were asked an open-ended question: “What should be the characteristics that a cognizant citizen should have?” The themes and categories for their answers to the question are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Distribution of participants’ responses regarding the characteristics a Cognizant Citizen should have”.

Theme	Category	Frequency
Value	Honesty	9
	Respect	7
	Responsibility	6
	Being devoted to country	4
	Being open to innovation	4
	Diligence	3
	Tolerance	2
	Democracy	1
	Compromiser	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>37</b>	
Skill	Self-development	5
	Following social developments	5
	Critical thinking	4
	Law literate	3
	Communication	2
	Research	1
	Empathy	1
	Being able to evaluate with different point of view	1
	Decision-making	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>	
Knowledge	Knowledge about rights	6
	Knowledge about duties	3
	Knowledge about the culture	3
	Being knowledgeable about everything	2
	Attaching importance to reading	2
	Being aware of the public	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	
Behavior	Obeying the rules	4
	Ability to fight for rights	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	

The theme that which is repeated most frequently by the participants for “the characteristics a conscious citizen should have” is value (37), followed by skill (23), knowledge (17) and behavior (6) themes. Honesty (9), respect (7) and responsibility (6) are considered to be the main values a conscious citizen should have. Self-development (5), followed by social developments (5) and critical thinking (4), have the highest frequencies considering the theme of skill, while knowledge of rights (6) comes to the fore relating to the theme of knowledge. In the theme of behavior, obeying the rules (4) and the ability to fight for rights (2) are prominent. When themes and sub-categories are evaluated in general, it can be said that participants think that the values and skills of citizenship are important in terms of the characteristics that a conscious citizen should have. It is particularly remarkable that they emphasize self-development, following an agenda, critical thinking, legal literacy and communication skills. Considering that these skills are also effective citizenship skills, it can be said that participants describe those who have effective citizenship skills as conscious citizens. That they define individuals who have knowledge of rights, obey the rules and struggle when their rights as conscious citizens are violated is reminiscent of an effective citizenship approach.

While the participants' conscious citizen identification is in line with the effective citizenship approach, it is an inconsistent finding, as the participants themselves exhibit passive citizenship thoughts and behaviors based on duty and responsibility.

Participant F3, who is a teacher, listed the characteristics that a citizen should have as "honesty, being respectful of different views, being conciliatory, caring about reading, being hardworking, etc." and drew attention to reading books. Unlike other participants, participant M21, who is a civil servant and member of a non-governmental organization (union), emphasizes legal literacy and democracy with his statement, "Rights, law and justice should be protected by democracy".

In addition, F2 stated "a citizen should be aware of the public and be able to evaluate from a different point of view" while M6 said "a citizen should be empathetic, responsible, tolerant, respectful to society and researcher", F12 said "citizens should be respectful, tolerant, know their duties, fulfil their responsibilities, relate to and follow social events", F17 said "A citizen should be critical in his/her thinking and open to innovation.. She/he must improve himself" and M32 stated "a citizen ought to know what is going on in the country and have decision making skills". F35 said "a citizen has to improve itself, be honest, be respectful" and M37 stated "a citizen has to be committed to his country, treat everyone with respect and work". Participants were asked an open-ended question: "What characteristics should an adult have for a sustainable democratic society?" The themes and categories of their answers to the question are shown in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Distribution of participants' responses regarding "the characteristics that an adult should have for a sustainable democratic society".

Theme	Category	Frequency
Value	Democratic values	9
	Respect	8
	Respect for differences	7
	Openness to criticism	5
	Being fair	3
	Responsibility	3
	Honesty	2
	Empathy	2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>39</b>
Behavior	Voting in elections	15
	Exercising rights	3
	Performing duties	3
	Obeying the rules	3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>24</b>
Knowledge	Legal knowledge	4
	Knowledge of democracy	3
	Knowledge of rights	3
	Knowledge of citizenship duties	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	

The themes which are repeated most frequently by the participants are value (39), behavior (24) and knowledge (11) respectively. The most frequently stated categories under the value theme are democratic values (9), respect (8), respect for differences (7) and openness to criticism (5). It can be said that these categories also come across as necessary or even mandatory values for living together in a sustainable democratic society, and that participants have this consciousness. The most frequently stated categories under the behavior theme are voting in elections (15), exercising rights (3), performing duties (3) and obeying the rules (3). In this way, it can be seen that the participants again emphasize the behaviors necessary for a sustainable democratic society. The most frequently stated categories under the knowledge theme are legal knowledge (4), knowledge of democracy (3) and knowledge of rights (3) listed by the participants as the knowledge that adults must have for a

sustainable democratic society. On the other hand, participants never mentioned some basic skills that adults should have for a sustainable democratic society (decision making, communication, problem solving, critical thinking, etc.).

It is very important that participants emphasize democratic values, the values necessary to live together, and especially respect for differences and openness to criticism. On the other hand, the fact that the voting behavior in the elections is more likely to come to mind when democracy is mentioned can be interpreted as that the participants reduce democracy to only the ability to vote in elections, similarly to passive citizens.

Considering that the participants who reduced democracy to voting in elections were primary school-educated housewives and secondary school-educated apprentices, a proportionate relationship between the level of education and consciousness of democracy comes to mind. On the other hand, the statements of teachers and civil servants with undergraduate and graduate degrees draw attention to democratic values and an emphasis on maintaining democracy.

The statements of participants M6, F8, F17 and M27 show that, as the level of education increases, the importance participants place on democratic values increases: M6: "An adult must know the value of democracy first. She/he has to have empathy. She/he should know his responsibilities". F8: "She/he absolutely must be respectful first. She/he needs to know that you have different ideas. She/he should know, he should accept that both his own ideas and opposing ideas can co-exist. She/he shouldn't do to anyone else what he doesn't want done to him". F17: "She/he should be open to criticism. She/he should respect people and different ideas. She/he should be able to empathize. She/he should be fair. M27: "She/he must fulfil citizenship duties (voting, obeying the rules, etc.). He must stand up for democracy and its values". Indeed, the statements of F8, a university graduate, "She/he ought to be respectful and fair. She/he ought to use his vote in elections and believe in democracy, she/he should have some knowledge about law," and M24 "will have democratic values such as Respect, Responsibility, Justice First. He'll exercise his rights," are other examples of this situation.

Participants were asked an open-ended question: "What are the citizenship education needs of adults for a sustainable democratic society?". The themes and categories of their answers to the question are shown in Table 5.

**Table 5.** Distribution of participants' responses to "the needs of adults regarding citizenship education for a sustainable democratic society".

Theme	Category	Frequency
Knowledge	Legal knowledge	18
	Knowledge about democracy	6
	Knowledge about rights	6
	Knowledge about History	3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>
Value	Democratic values	7
	Respect	4
	Tolerance	2
	Responsibility	1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>

The themes which are repeated most frequently by the participants are knowledge (33) and value (14). The most frequently mentioned categories are: legal knowledge (18), knowledge of democracy (6) and knowledge of rights (6) (considering the knowledge theme), democratic values (7), respect (4), tolerance (2) and responsibility (1) (considering the value theme). It can be said that the participants care about democratic values, respect, tolerance and responsibility for a sustainable democratic society, which they constantly expressed in the former, open-ended questions.

These findings can also be interpreted as evidence that the participants did not have sufficient knowledge of law and democracy, and therefore were unable to provide further means of democratic

participation, i.e., effective citizenship. Participants F1, M4, F20 and M32 put emphasis on information about the law and democratic values: F1: “Adults should be taught to approach all age groups and everyone with understanding and tolerance”, M4: “Adults can be particularly informed about the use of laws and rights”, F20: “Democracy and rights must be taught. How to exercise her/his rights, what to do when her/his rights are violated. We need a lot of training on this”, M32: “History, values of our society, what democracy is, laws”. Similarly, F25 asserted “Everyone should be taught their rights and how to exercise them. What to do in case of infringement is unknown. M27 also proposed that rights should be taught: “We must teach why democracy is necessary and the knowledge of it. We must help people to acquire democratic values. I think we should also teach our history”, and M36 expressed his opinion as “Respect is very important. Respect and responsibility should be taught”.

These findings can be interpreted as an explanation of the participants’ lack of sufficient knowledge of law and democracy and therefore their inability to provide answers to the behavior of democratic participation, i.e., active citizenship. It can also be argued that participants’ answers to due diligence and open-ended questions are consistent with each other, and that they have a duty-and responsibility-based citizenship awareness in line with the traditional approach to national citizenship, and that they behave accordingly. It should be noted that for effective citizenship behavior knowledge, skills and values related to the subject should be developed first. It is clear that participants who are adults, especially those with low levels of education, cannot be sufficiently effective in contributing to a sustainable democratic society with their lack of knowledge, skills and values regarding citizenship.

Three unconcluded scenario texts, to be concluded by the participants, related to democracy, were used in the interview as part of the research. In this way, it aimed to determine the thoughts and behaviors of the participants for a sustainable democratic society. These event texts concern the local election result, a factory polluting the environment and the coup attempt on democracy, which is considered undemocratic. Participants’ responses were evaluated in only one category. Their answers were analyzed according to the dominant view. The answer categories of participants completing the result of the scenario texts are shown in Table 6.

**Table 6.** Distribution of participants’ completion of the result of the scenario texts.

Scenario Text Subject	Category Name	Frequency
Local election result deemed undemocratic	I share my thoughts with those around me.	13
	Whatever politicians say happens. I don’t care.	9
	Elections must be repeated.	8
	We must fight for democracy.	7
	I investigate its compliance with the law.	3
	<b>Total</b>	40
Environmental Pollution	I report the factory.	19
	I draw attention to environmental pollution.	11
	I officially warn the relevant institutions.	8
	I fight for the closure of the factory.	2
	<b>Total</b>	40
A coup attempt on democracy	We must defend/fight for democracy.	15
	I call for peace, unity and solidarity.	12
	We have to protect our rights.	7
	I can’t do anything in a situation like this.	6
	<b>Total</b>	40

In Table 6, the majority of participants said, “I share my opinion with those around me regarding the outcome of the local elections, which are considered undemocratic” (13 people) and this category was followed respectively by “Whatever politicians say happens. I don’t care.” (nine people), “Elections must be repeated” (eight people) said, “We must fight for democracy” (seven people) and “I investigate its compliance with the law” (three people). It is noteworthy that there are a small number of participants (10 people) who express their opinion to fight for democracy and research the issue

mentioned in the scenario text legally. The fact that the other participants (30 people) stated that they would exhibit more passive behaviors, such as exchanging opinions with others around them and not being interested, also shows their understanding of citizenship. Another important finding is that participants over the age of 40, who graduated from primary and secondary schools, expressed their views in this way and younger participants expressed a desire to fighting for democracy. For example, F8, who is 24 years old and has a master's degree, said, "We must fight for democracy" while secondary school graduate M4 said, "Whatever the politicians say happens. We don't know things like that", and another secondary school graduate M11 said, "I assess the situation as per my position within the framework of the economic and political power I have. I probably won't do anything". M18, a 35-year-old graduate, said, "We can't do without democracy. I fight to rebuild democracy", and M15, a primary school graduate worker, said, "I am a worker. Seniors have knowledge about things like that. Politicians must be in action". On the other hand, M31, a primary school graduate, replied, "I'm not interested".

While young and educated participants who would participate in the process of appealing a local election result adopt the idea of democratic appeal and struggle, it is a remarkable finding that primary school and middle school graduates over the age of 40 remain indifferent to the subject, and even think that they cannot have an influence or any authority. This can be explained by the participants not having sufficiently absorbed democracy and the democratic way of life or haing some drawbacks about it. The fact that participants included the knowledge of law and democracy and democratic values among the subjects of the citizenship education that adults need for a sustainable democratic society can be shown as evidence of their deficiencies in this field.

The most frequently repeated statement by the participants for the scenario text is "I report the factory" (19 people), which is followed by "I draw attention to environmental pollution" (eight people), "I officially warn the relevant institutions" (eight people), "I fight for the closure of the factory" (two people). In the scenario text about the local election result, participants did not respond in detail, but when it came to environmental pollution, they explained in much more detailed and very similar statements.

The fact that the participants can easily express these opinions, which include environmental sensitivity, may be related to the fact that the environmental issue is more universal and apolitical. The issue of local elections may have been perceived by the participants as a political issue, and therefore they could not easily express their views. Regarding the scenario text, F3 said, "I submit a petition containing my complaint about the environment to the relevant places. I warn them about environmental pollution. I tell them 'I think a factory like this should be shut down'", which reflects the views of almost all participants.

In the scenario text about the coup attempt on democracy, the participants were most likely to express their views on the outcome of the event, saying, "We must defend/fight for democracy" (15 people). This was followed by "I call for peace, unity and solidarity" (12 people), "We must protect our rights" (seven people), and "I can't do anything in a situation like this" (six people). It was found that participants did not give detailed explanations in this section, similar to the unconcluded scenario text related to the local election. However, while no participant approved the coup attempt, many participants openly expressed the idea of unity and solidarity, calling for peace and, if not possible, fighting for democracy. It was found that six of the participants did not consider themselves adequate in combat. Regarding the scenario text, F1 said, "Problems cannot be solved by a coup", M6 said, "I strive for peace and tranquility", F12 said, "I would protest. I would fight for democracy", M24 said, "I say that there is no power above the will of people, I fight for democracy". F35, who lived in the days of the 1980 coup in Turkey, said, "We should not shut up. I experienced the coup in the past. The coup must not be accepted" and M39, who witnessed the 1980 coup like F35, stated, "The coup is not a good thing. It causes Martial Law Order. Liberties are postponed. The coup is not good. People must fight to keep democracy alive". In line with all these views, it can be said that participants tend to struggle when necessary to preserve democracy.

#### 4. Conclusions, Discussion and Recommendations

Conducted to determine the status and needs of adults regarding citizenship education in a sustainable democratic society, this research revealed that participants follow the news about social events, developments about economic and political events and think that they can evaluate the events they encounter from different perspectives. However, it was found that they avoid the responsibility of taking a role in solving social, and especially political, problems. In democracies in western European countries, many individuals consider that social problems are not taken into account in parliamentary debates and by political parties, which makes people feel alienated from the political sphere [46]. Today, the existence of a growing gap between democratic discourse and concrete reality has reached undeniable dimensions [47]. Democracy on a global scale, while gaining prestige, is subject to serious criticism within its existing institutions and functioning; a crisis of democracy has been mentioned and it has been claimed that even democratic regimes are sustained under the rule of elected kings [48]. Citizens who watch rather than do, play the role of “watchman” and are no different from an audience that falls asleep watching a bad movie [49]. This whole climate of controversy and insecurity can be cited as a reason for adults to avoid taking social and political responsibility. In the study, participants who stated that they did not have problems communicating with people and official institutions adopted the idea of combating rights violations, but they again avoided carrying out this behavior and preferred to follow the course of events. However, not only national societies, but also the international community, should assume responsibility for the realization of contemporary democratic concepts and should serve as an educational and socializing force, providing education on democracy, citizenship and statism [50]. Only in this way can it really contribute to the development of democracy in adults who feel safe in a sustainable democratic society.

The study revealed that participants (except for two) who were not members of any political party or non-governmental organization tried to exercise their voting rights in the elections but did not have sufficient information about their rights. In a research on the social participation of young people, it is emphasized that the participation and interest of young people in social events is sufficient, but they hesitate in becoming a member of political parties or expressing sympathy with political parties [51]. In another study, it was stated that young people may be shy about participation or have concerns about their views being taken into account and distrust politicians [52]. In Germany and Australia, however, it turned out that young people consider voting the most important means of political participation [53,54]. Studies on adult voting behavior in many countries, such as the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom, have shown that voting rates are declining, especially among young people [55,56]. It is emphasized that young voters in European Union countries do not show much interest in elections [52]. Moreover, it has been also found that young people in Turkey especially do not participate enough in civil society organizations, are apolitical about life except voting in elections, and prefer to stay out of political events [57]. In the World Values Survey [58], 47.4% of adults in Turkey considered politics important, while the percentage of active members of a political party was 1.5% and the percentage of active members of a non-governmental organization was 1.1%. In the same survey, the percentage of those who followed politics closely 8.7% and the percentage of those who fully trusted politics was 8.7%, while those 97.3% said they usually vote in general elections. Democratic participation in Turkey was found to be considerably lower than in South Korea, Germany, Chile, South Africa and Sweden; active participation in politics in Turkey was 2%, participation in voluntary organizations was 1%, and participation in protests and demonstrations was 5% [59]. These results, which also coincide with research findings, show that adults prefer to stay out of politics, except for voting in elections.

Participants in the study stated that they felt happy and patriotic in the country where they lived (the Republic of Turkey). Participants identified individuals who are patriotic, loyal to their homeland and nation, respectful, and conscious of duty and responsibility as good citizens. No participant has addressed the effective participation aspect of citizenship. In some studies, it was determined that social

anxiety-based characteristics, such as the individual's love of his country and taking responsibility for social issues were brought to the fore by the concept of a good citizen [60,61].

As a good citizen, participating in a democracy, dedication to the concepts of equal opportunity and freedom should form part of political life by voting, protesting and working in campaigns [62]. This study shows that adults sometimes have a passive-tracer perception of citizenship because they do not exhibit thoughts or behaviors regarding the participation dimension of citizenship other than voting in elections. It is not possible to consider adults who describe themselves as patriots as having a sense of duty and responsibility unless they have all the good citizen characteristics required in a sustainable democratic society.

Participants in the study stated the characteristics of a conscious citizen as being honest, respectful, responsible, following social developments, thinking critically, knowing their rights, complying with the rules, being able to fight for rights and having strong communication skills. The same participants listed the characteristics that an adult should have in a sustainable democratic society as having democratic values, respect, respect for differences, being open to criticism, voting in elections, exercising rights, performing duties, following the rules, and having knowledge of the law, rights and democracy. It can be seen that the participants did not mention skills such as decision making, communication, problem solving and critical thinking. It is remarkable that, unlike low-level educated participants, who view democracy as purely a matter of voting in elections, university graduates emphasize the importance of democratic values and believe that they can fight for democracy when needed. In the World Values Survey [56], 48.1% of adults in Turkey consider governing a country with a democratic political system to be very good, while 37.8% consider living in a democratic country to be very important. When the results of this research are taken into account, it can be said that there are significant deficiencies in building democratic governance and a sustainable democratic life.

It was found that the participants listed democratic values, including knowledge of the law, democracy, rights, history and respect, tolerance, and responsibility as the citizenship education needs of adults for a sustainable democratic society. Citizenship is a multidimensional concept consisting of a sense of identity, rights, responsibility and participation. It can be argued that participants perceive citizenship as a duty and responsibility rather than their level of rights and participation, due to the fact that they feel they belong to the state in which they live (the Republic of Turkey), they are patriotic and that they are aware of their responsibilities. As a matter of fact, the nation state defines the citizen as a person who is loyal and responsible to the state [63]. In the World Values Survey [58], 66.7% of adults in Turkey considered it important to fulfil their responsibilities, while 91.3% stated that they were proud to be Turks. Given that the results are consistent with the findings of this research, it can be said that the participants prioritize loving and fulfilling the responsibilities of the nation to which they belong, which is also an important indicator of national citizenship.

It can also be concluded that participants exhibited a duty- and responsibility-based citizenship behavior, in accordance with the traditional national citizenship approach. The results of the "citizenship in Turkey and the world" survey also reveal the perception of responsibility-based citizenship in Turkey [64]. It was concluded in the same study that the phenomenon of good citizenship in Turkey involves paying special attention to participating in elections, not avoiding taxes, attaching importance to living in accordance with legislation, approaching ethical values and differences with tolerance, and helping those who are financially worse off [64]. It is also accepted that such trends originate from culture and religion, and are widely adopted as official views in conservative Mediterranean and Latin cultures. In the same research, in terms of political participation, which is the main reflection of citizenship in politics, there is a very different landscape in ISSP countries, compared to the countries where democracy is situated, such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Switzerland and Scandinavian countries. In Turkey, the tendency to participate in protest content, such as petitioning, meeting and participating in demonstrations, which determines the content of direct and unusual participation, is very low [64]. In the research, it was concluded that the citizenship participation of individuals who do not have citizenship knowledge is not sufficient [65–67].

In democratic societies, citizens need to adhere to fundamental principles such as public sovereignty and the rule of law, and a good citizen respects the public interest and has fundamental values for the well-being of the public [68]. It is very important that adults in the research state that citizenship education is needed on the issues of rights, the law, knowledge of democracy and democratic values. The shortcomings of adults in these subjects can also be seen as the main reason for their inability to participate in citizenship.

It was found that participants preferred to share their thoughts with a close circle or were not interested in the outcome of the local elections, which were considered undemocratic. This behavior can be explained by the fact that they have not sufficiently assimilated to democracy and the democratic way of life. However, it was observed that young participants under the age of 25 stated that they could fight for democracy. Regarding an incident involving a factory causing environmental pollution, participants stated that they would exhibit behaviors such as reporting the factory, drawing attention to environmental pollution, officially warning the relevant institutions and fighting for the closure of the factory. It is concluded that participants exhibit global citizenship behaviors on a universal issue, such as environment pollution, but prefer to abstain on national political issues, and can fight for democracy only when the situation becomes inextricable. However, a good citizen means acting as an active citizen with citizenship knowledge, not adopting a passive attitude [69,70]. Active citizens can look critically at events and phenomena as opposed to passive ones, which is essential to the well-being of a society [71]. This study also showed that participants adopt the role of passive citizens and exhibit passive citizenship behaviors unless forced to do otherwise. Creating a common vision for a sustainable and desirable future is the most critical task facing humanity today [72]. It is only possible for individuals to act together for a common future and be a partner in solving problems when acting in the role of a participatory and active citizen, not a passive one. Indeed, a study concluded that people who sacrifice their personal pleasures in order to participate constructively in society can contribute significantly to society [73].

For a sustainable democratic society, adults' understanding of citizenship and the behaviors they display are crucial. This is important both for the democratic life of society and for children, the adults of the future, who take adults as role models. Hence, children first monitor, judge and then internalize the behaviors of others and adults, and they can internalize the behaviors they find positive. Observational learning may lead to the weakening of not only moral behaviors but also existing values [74]. Therefore, children who internalize the undemocratic behavior of adults and/or their understanding and attitudes regarding passive citizenship may threaten the goal of a sustainable democratic society. For this reason, in recent years, there have been aims to reinforce the knowledge, skills and values of children and young people regarding effective citizenship, and citizenship training is organized focusing on the development of management/political culture for young people [26]. If a society in which a democratic lifestyle is adopted is to be sustained, responsible and effective citizens are needed for this. In particular, citizens' education should be organized in order to improve their political and legal literacy, as well as political, social and civic participation, and the democratic values of adults, who are both today's decision makers and role models for tomorrow's decision makers. It should also be noted that issues such as sustainable development, the global environment and human rights are indispensable to democratic life in the global age.

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